

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

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The Index for Volume XXXII of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 1954, compiled by Mrs. Rella Looney, Archivist, is now ready for free distribution to those who receive the magazine. Orders for this Index should be sent to the Secretary, Oklahoma Historical Society, Historical Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

 JOURNEY OVERLAND BY STAGE FROM JEFFERSON CITY TO
 FORT GIBSON IN 1858

Through the kind interest of Mr. Harry E. Pratt, State Historian, Illinois State Historical Library, at Springfield, Illinois, the attention of the Editor was called to a letter dated from Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation, on May 31, 1858, published in the *Illinois State Chronicle*, Decatur, Illinois, for June 17, 1858. The letter gives the story of the overland journey of a California bound company that will be of especial interest to readers of this number of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*:

OUR ARIZONA CORRESPONDENT.

Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation,
 May 31st, 1858.

Wm. J. Usrey, Esq.

Dear Sir:—Presuming that some of your readers would be glad to hear from the California and Arizona company, I propose to write you occasionally from different points along the route, and if you think you can fix them up for publication you are at liberty to do so.

We left Decatur on the 11th of May, to overtake the train which had proceeded [preceded] us about two weeks. We came by the way of St. Louis and Jefferson City. Nothing of interest transpired on our route to that point, except the roads between Jefferson City and Springfield, Mo., which were *painfully* interesting. We had to travel by stage, on roads of which I never saw worse. We finally got through safe, although not without several break downs, tip overs, and other accompaniments to that mode of traveling, which all served to dispel the monotony of two days and nights in a stage coach.

The company had not arrived at Springfield when we reached there, but were within a few miles. The next day, being the 18th of May, they came into Springfield, and we joined them. The boys were all hearty and in fine spirits, altho' looking a little the worse for wear upon the road. That portion of the train which had started ahead at Decatur, were still in advance. The first night we had the opportunity of camping with them at a beautiful spot a few miles from town. It was a beautiful night, and the novelty of camping out was enough to make us enter into the spirit of it; we enjoyed it very much, and I never slept sounder than I did that night upon the ground. The next morning, the 19th, we were up early, and having pulled up stakes, we entered upon the journey with a right good will. We traveled along through a very pretty country, on the road to

Sarcopie [Sarcoxie, Mo.] The prairie and timber seem to be very nearly equally divided. The prairie is high and rolling. The timber is not very good, being of rather a scrubby nature. The whole country is abundantly supplied with springs and rivulets, and seems to have been intended, by nature, for a first class stock country, as the grass is very good and plenty of it. The soil is not so good as in Illinois by considerable. It is a lighter, more clayey soil, and in many places rocky and gravelly. It is said to be a fine wheat country, but they do not call it extra for any other productions.

The first town we came to was Mount Vernon, county seat of Lawrence County. There is considerable of the Missouri graduation land in this County, which could be had for seventy-five cents per acre; it is very pretty prairie. The next day after leaving Mt. Vernon, we had a most terrific thunderstorm; for three or four hours it poured down in torrents. We happened to be on the prairie at the time, and the whole country seemed to be one sheet of water; it finally wound up by a hail storm, the hail stones were as large as filberts and walnuts.

The same day (21st) we passed through Sarcopie [Sarcoxie], which is quite a pretty little place, of about three or four hundred inhabitants. We then continued on to Neosho, which we reached the next day. Neosho seems to be more of an enterprising town than we have come through, everything looks neat, and improvements seem to be going on. We then left Missouri, following the line road between the Indian Territory and Arkansas, for two or three days. We came through the town of Maysville, Ark., which was our last town in the States.

The country through this section is very rough and also poor soil. Everything goes on smoothly, we have showers often. The Indians are plenty through here; they are very friendly and seem afraid of the whites. We had to commence guard though, on account of horse thieves. We had our horses stampeded once and it delayed us in hunting them, but we found them all. We hear of a great many depredations committed upon emigrants through here. We hurried on as fast as possible toward the center of the Cherokee Nation. We arrived at Tahlequah, the capital of the C.N., on the 28th. It is quite a neat town. We made considerable stop here, having a little curiosity to learn about this tribe. We find some highly intelligent Cherokees, who speak English fluently and have good educations. There are also quite a number of whites among them, who are generally in trade; which they [are] allowed to do providing they marry native women, and if they do not do this, they are not allowed to own any property in the Territory. They have two large seminaries, one male and the other female, one of these buildings cost \$30,000; they are both fine buildings.

The Indians are very proud of their agricultural and mechanical implements, in which they think they are equal to any of the whites. I wish I had more time to speak of this nation, as they have rather peculiar and interesting habits and customs, which I should like to speak of, but I have to close this letter.

We arrived at Fort Gibson on the 29th, found the boys under S. R. Hammer's charge well, and anxious to be going on across the plains. We made some additions to our company here, laid in our stock of provisions for the trip, and crossed the Grand River today, 31st. The town of the Fort, seems to have been quite a business place at one time, but it now looks rather deserted since the soldiers have left; being nothing more than a trading post for the Indians. There are two or three good stores here, and some good dwellings, mostly built by the government, and built strong.

I must now close, but I will write again soon, at Albuquerque, if not before.

Yours, &c.,

ALIGATOR.

MARY GREENLEAF MEMORIAL

High on the north slope of a limestone bluff overlooking Delaware Creek southeast of Bromide in Johnston County are the broken remains of a now neglected and almost forgotten gravestone. On the pieces, soon to be in their second hundred years, after being fitted back together the inscription is still legible:

In Memory of
 MARY C. GREENLEAF
 Born Newburyport, Mass.
 January 31st, 1800
 died June 26, 1857

For only one year was she permitted
 to labor as a missionary among the
 Chickasaw, but her labor was not
 in vain.

The stone, now amid dense brambles and undergrowth, and the only one yet remaining, marks the site of the cemetery for Wapanucka Institute, the renowned Chickasaw Rock Academy. The academy buildings, too, are in ruins; and today a great pile of white stone, some one hundred yards east of the grave, gives little evidence of the once prosperous institution that was sheltered inside the now broken walls.

It is good to record that a renewed interest in the Academy and its grave yard promises to give this historical place the care and treasured attention it has so long deserved. A committee has been organized from among former students and their families and a group of local citizens representing the Alumni Association of Wapanucka High School is keenly interested in seeing that the needed work is commenced before too much longer.

On September 19, 1954, the grave site was visited by a Committee from the Oklahoma Historical Society, meeting there with Mr. Bob Hamer and Mr. Lawrence Stuttee of the local group, and initial plans were made for the required work.

Since that date, and through the generosity of F. A. Gillespie and Sons, of Tulsa, one half acre comprising the Mary Greenleaf¹ grave site, together with an easement for access to the plot, has been

¹ Biographical data on Mary Coombs Greenleaf are found in previously published articles: Muriel H. Wright, "Wapanucka Academy, Chickasaw Nation," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (December, 1934), pp. 402-31; Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Mary C. Greenleaf," *ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (Spring, 1946), pp. 26-39.—Ed.

acquired by the Oklahoma Historical Society, and the local committee has commenced active plans for the required and needed beautification.

George H. Shirk

A WAPANUCKA LEGEND

A faded, pencilled copy of an old poem, "The Ghost of Wapanucka," was received by the Editor recently in the fine old fashioned handwriting of Mrs. Holmes Colbert who copied the poem from a clipping for her niece, Mrs. Jessie R. Moore, in 1908. This item, aside from its subject and the author, John Walter Sams, has an interesting history since the yellow leaves of tablet paper are in the handwriting of Mrs. Colbert who was of the noted Love family among the Chickasaws and as a young girl had attended the early mission schools in the 1840's. She was born in Mississippi in 1833, the daughter of Henry Love who as a Chickasaw delegate to Washington, D. C., some months later, signed the Chickasaw treaty in that City on May 24, 1834. Her marriage to Holmes Colbert in the early 1850's united two leading Chickasaw families, for the name Colbert had been known among the Chickasaws for one hundred years. Holmes Colbert (born 1829 in Mississippi) attended Union College, Schenectady, New York, where he roomed with his Choctaw classmate, Allen Wright (later Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation), in the school year of 1851-52. Young Holmes returned to the Indian Territory and is known in history as the writer of the Chickasaw constitution soon after the signing of the Choctaw-Chickasaw Treaty on June 22, 1855, which provided the establishment of the Chickasaw Nation with its own government and laws. Holmes Colbert became an outstanding leader among his people, serving many years as their delegate to Washington, D.C., where he died in 1873. His remains were brought back to the Chickasaw Nation, and burial made in the old cemetery at Bloomfield Academy. His grave is still seen at this location a few miles southwest of Achille, in Bryan County. Mr. and Mrs. Colbert had their beautiful home in the Red River valley country near Bloomfield. In her later years, Elizabeth Love Colbert lived at Purcell where she died in 1914.

The theme of the poem, "The Ghost of Wapanucka," is based on the legends which floated around in that country of scenic beauty—low lying limestone hills and prairies—near the stream now called Delaware Creek, which was first known as Wapanucka Creek, in Johnston County. The name Wapanucka is from *Wapanackki* ("easterners" or "eastern land people"), the Indian name of the tribe known as the Delaware (the English name) who formerly lived on the Delaware River, in the present states of Pennsylvania and Delaware. The name of Wapanucka Creek dates back to about 1840 when a band of Delaware Indians settled along the stream in this

part of the Choctaw Nation. The first boarding school for Chickasaw girls was called Wapanucka Institute (1852) or Wapanucka Academy because it was located on a hillside overlooking this springfed stream. Today, the town of Wapanucka, about four miles southeast of the site of this noted Chickasaw school perpetuates the name in Oklahoma.

Wapanucka was platted as a townsite when the Western Oklahoma Railroad (later known as the Haileyville-Ardmore branch of the Rock Island Railway) was constructed in 1902. The late Reverend Allen Wright's farm and ranch headquarters at Button Spring, so called from the peculiar limestone formation around the spot, on the hill on the southside of the townsite, was the location of the Wapanucka post office established on December 17, 1888, with Alva A. Taylor as postmaster. The first post office by this name was located a few miles west near the Wapanucka Academy, and was established March 5, 1883, with Frank P. Wells as postmaster.² The Delaware Indians had disappeared from this region forty years before these post office dates but stories about their early settlement still lingered around the sites where they had had their log cabin homes and rail fenced fields. One of these stories with embellishments was the subject of small advertising pamphlet "The Witches' Burying Ground" for Wapanucka after the railroad was constructed through here, written by a young attorney and booster of the town, W. L. Richards whose wife was a daughter of Reverend Allen Wright, the former classmate of Holmes Colbert. Then, John Walter Sams, a newspaper man, came along and wrote his poem to spread the name of Wapanucka, which brings up a lot of history for us and recalls some old Indian legends.

Here is the poem treasured by Mrs. Holmes Colbert and given to her niece, Mrs. Jessie R. Moore nearly a half century ago:

Sept. 13, 1908

The Ghost of Wapanucka

The following verses are dedicated to the memory of the Delaware Chief who was killed in a battle with the Choctaw Light Horsemen near Rock Academy more than forty years ago and from whom it is said the city of Wapanucka derived its name.

From far away in Memory's Valley
Comes a tale of old time,
Comes a tale of Red Man's legends,
Ringing sweetly as a chime.

'Tis the tale of Wapanucka
Chief of the Delawares
When he came to seek the Choctaws
In their Rocky Mountain lairs.

On the morn he left his country
Hope was high within his breast,

² George H. Shirk, "First Post within the Boundaries of Oklahoma," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (Summer, 1948), pp. 179-244.

And he made a vow to conquer
 All the south and east and west.

At his back a thousand warriors
 Trained the arrow, bent the bow,
 And the plume of Wapanucka
 Led his people to the show.

Led his people to the Choctaws,
 To the Choctaws and to death,
 For the Choctaw braves were legion
 And their stroke a sinuous breath.

Led he on his valiant warriors
 'Till the hills were dyed with red;
 'Till the vales were filled with corpses
 And none to mourn the dead.

No one was left but Wapanucka
 Fighting as no man had ever fought;
 Then he sank to earth a martyr
 To the wrong that he had wrought.

And now the ghost of Wapanucka
 Can oftentimes be seen,
 A Wanderer of the Choctaw hillsides
 When they are clothed with verdure green.

When the north winds' chill is blowing down
 Each rocky vale and glen,
 You may hear the squaws a-crying
 For the braves who died like men.

And the wrath of Wapanucka
 Floats above the mountain crest
 Ever moving, ever longing
 For the move that bringeth rest.

—John Walter Sams

IN MEMORY OF LYNN RIGGS, OKLAHOMA POET

The following Resolution in memory of the Oklahoma Poet,
 Lynn Riggs, has been received by the Oklahoma Historical Society:

RESOLUTION

ENROLLED HOUSE

BY: WADLEY of the House

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 510

and

McSPADDEN of the Senate.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING THE
 LIFE AND WORKS OF LYNN RIGGS, DECEASED.

WHEREAS, Lynn Riggs was born near Claremore, Oklahoma, August 31, 1899, and was educated in the State's Public Schools and the University of Oklahoma, and his youth in a vigorous and growing young State prepared him for his life's work as one of our nation's foremost dramatists and poets; and—

WHEREAS, his brilliant career was marked by many successes, the most outstanding of which was "Green Grow the Lilacs," first produced in 1931, the rousing folk drama which later led to the famous star-studded musical and made the name "Oklahoma" a household word throughout the civilized world; and—

WHEREAS, his "Two Oklahoma Plays," "Roadside," and "The Cherokee Night," as well as his many other poems and plays always reflected his knowledge of and love for his native State.—

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN:

That, as representatives of the people of the State of Oklahoma we laud the life and literary works of Lynn Riggs, and commemorate his memory in the Archives of our State:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this Resolution be presented to the family of the said Lynn Riggs, and to the Historical Society of the State of Oklahoma.

Adopted by the House of Representatives the 10th day of February, 1955.

B. E. Harkey, Speaker of the House
of Representatives

Adopted by the Senate the 14th day of February, 1955.

Pink Williams, President of the Senate

OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE

Received by the Secretary of State
this 15 day of February 1955.
at 4:00 o'clock p.m.

Andy Anderson

By: A. Jones